

- Bill Would Allow County to Impose Mandatory Restrictions on Hours of Operation -

Washington, DC – Representatives Nita Lowey (D-NY18), Christopher Shays (R-CT4), Eliot Engel (D-NY17) and John Hall (D-NY19) today introduced legislation that would allow Westchester County to impose mandatory restrictions limiting the hours of operation at Westchester County Airport. The restrictions would protect the surrounding communities from the effects of aircraft noise exposure during overnight hours.

Westchester County Airport is surrounded by the residential suburban communities of Harrison, Rye, North Castle, Rye Brook, Port Chester and Mount Pleasant, New York, as well as Greenwich, Connecticut. Restrictions on flight operations have been in place since 1981, but have been voluntary since 1983. The bill would allow the airport to once again impose mandatory restrictions without seeking prior approval from the Department of Transportation.

"Westchester Airport is vitally important to our region, but its growth should not be at the expense of the tranquility of Westchester County," Lowey said. "This bill would allow the county to impose restrictions that work for its residents, balancing their interests with those of a bustling airport."

"Westchester County Airport's neighbors have a right to enjoy evenings at home without being plagued by excessive noise from air traffic," said Hall. "This legislation would help restore the balance between community standards and airport operations by giving local authorities more control over the quality of life in their neighborhoods."

"I appreciate the importance of Westchester Airport to its many users, but I am tremendously concerned that Westchester is on its way to becoming the region's fourth major airport, and that would mean constant flights, night and day, over most of Connecticut's Fourth District," Shays said. "We must not let Westchester Airport become the next LaGuardia, Kennedy or Newark. Because several commercial carriers have chosen to be poor corporate citizens and entirely disregard the existing voluntary curfew, it is entirely reasonable for the local community to decide it does not want planes taking off at five in the morning."

Congressman Engel said, "The people of Westchester deserve the peace and quiet that drew them here. It is not asking too much for airplanes to take off and land at reasonable times, in harmony with the peoples' lifestyles."

"We continually try to balance the needs of the airport users with the quality of life in the surrounding communities," said Westchester County Executive Andy Spano. "We have done everything we can to make sure the airport has a positive effect on the environment – the one thing we cannot control is the planes – both private and commercial – that arrive late at night or that take off before dawn, in violation of our voluntary curfew. We need to have a mandatory curfew, and I thank our Members of Congress for submitting this legislation."